

STARTING INSTRUCTIONAL DISCUSSIONS USING A VISUAL DIAGRAM

Purpose	This tool offers trainers and coaches a guide in using the Doing What Works visual diagram, <i>Preschool Language and Literacy</i> , as a starting point for discussion of preschool literacy practices.
Materials	Copies of the visual diagram, <i>Preschool Language and Literacy</i>
Media	None
Topic	Preschool Language and Literacy
Practice	Use Interactive and Dialogic Reading

Starting Instructional Discussions Using a Visual Diagram

Visual diagrams about classroom practices can be an excellent tool for jumpstarting professional development conversations about current practices. These conversations allow trainers to understand receptivity to new practices, build on teachers' knowledge base, incorporate their experiences into training examples, and correct any potential misunderstandings about implementation. Similarly, coaches and mentors can use such discussions as a "starting place" to engage teachers in discussions about how to improve instruction.

To effectively use the visual diagram for early childhood language and literacy to guide such a conversation:

1. Download the visual diagram and print copies for participants—in color, if possible.
2. Indicate to participants that this picture shows two literacy practices (phonological awareness and interactive and dialogic reading) for which there is a research base and depicts some of the "big ideas" involved in both practices.

Ask teachers to comment on what they see pictured in the center of the diagram that is similar to what an observer might see in their classrooms. Examples might be: classroom library of children's books; children's artwork posted; carpeted floor for flexible activities; small groups of children working with adults; teacher and teacher assistant carrying out different instructional activities; and so forth.

What do they see that represents ideal practice? Where would they suggest improvements (e.g., books could be displayed so book covers are visible)?

3. Focus on the right side of the diagram, which depicts the "big ideas" in interactive and dialogic reading.

Ask participants to read the words in the frame and the dialogue balloons: *What features of interactive reading are being conveyed through the picture and the dialogue balloons?* Examples: the teacher asks questions to scaffold children's understanding of the story; the teacher asks children to make predictions; the teacher asks children to make inferences; the teacher is showing children the pictures in the story; the teacher is working with a small group; some children can tell the story through the pictures.

If no one raises the three stages of reading described in the frame (teacher as guide, teacher and child engage in dialogue, child as storyteller) point out that the roles represent increasing involvement of children in the storytelling.

4. Ask participants to share their own experience in trying to engage children with storybooks:
 - Have you used storybooks to build vocabulary? What books work well? How do you select words to focus on?
 - How do you get children to talk about books? What types of questions and activities work well?

- Are some of your children able to retell stories you have read? How do you encourage children to do so?
5. If you want to use the discussion as an opportunity to set the agenda for additional learning activities, you might next ask participants to identify what they would like to learn about interactive and dialogic reading. Examples: how to encourage children to talk; how to engage children who don't seem interested in books; how to ask questions using the dialogic reading approach; how to teach vocabulary; and so forth.
 6. The left side of the diagram can be used in a similar way to talk about the continuum of phonological awareness skills. Also elicit teachers' ideas about how interactive and dialogic reading and instruction in phonological awareness can be integrated in classroom activities.